project proposal.cem altınöz ∎ 05/12

What?

I want to make an installation consisting of a moving image work and a number of still images, which will be questioning society's relationship with media images: specifically our lack of power in controlling these images and how they impact on our sense of identity.

The moving image will be a single channel video in the form of a TV which is channel hopping "autonomously". It will consist mostly of found images mainly from Turkish mass media channels: images of newscasts, political statements, period drama series, music videos, advertisements and so on. I will make a montage that generates the effect of channel hopping, with sudden changes in the volume, the change in the quality of the image etc.

In this random looking act of zapping, I will create a hierarchy of images that will eventually promote those images that I consider "abject": primarily images of violent and socially traumatic incidents, specifically those from recent Turkish history.

The general look I imagine for the video will be promoting the aesthetics of the appropriated, pixelated, poor image as mentioned by Hito Steyerl in her article "In Defense of the Poor Image" (Steyerl, 2009).

For the still images, I want to make photoshoots with people and their relation to screens, probably in a studio setting that I will have control over the composition and mise en scene. I aim for these images to have a disturbing and beautiful nature. Most possibly they will be large, framed analog prints.

How?

For my thesis I am investigating the relationship of such mass media images in Turkey to the collective memory of Turkish people. I will go on to examine counter archival practices in my country. For these I am reading works of people who produced texts in these domains, such as Maurice Halbwachs, Aleida and Jan Assmann and Pierre Levy. My research on the thesis is going hand in hand with my project.

Also, by collecting footage from Youtube and other online channels, I am starting to build an (counter)archive myself. I am currently making prototype videos of small durations out of them.

I am using a continuation of the methods I was using in the first year of the masters, by scanning a screen in order to get a static image from a duration of a video. I am testing out how their quality and appearance changes though different settings and the possibilities of making moving images out of them. During the winter break, I will be experimenting with making photographs of people with screens.

Timetable?

October - December: Forming the thesis and conducting research + making small video prototypes out of collected images + prototype of making stills from moving images.

December - January: making photographs of people with screens + working on the thesis + IFFR

February: Thesis + examination of the photographs I made during the break + working on the design of the video

March: Mainly working on the thesis + making the photographs for the show

April: *Hand in thesis.* Aim to finalize the video by the end of the month.

May - June: *Finish the video.* Start designing the space and how the works are going to be presented.

Why?

I see a correlation between the daily onslaught of images resulting in an inability to retain lasting impressions of these images, and the ever-changing political agenda of Turkey, full of injustices, scandals and sensational statements that result in an amnesic social memory in the public. This amnesia does not only cause people to forget past events, but also damages perception and understanding of contemporary events.

Turkish society is highly communal in a sense; when compared to the Western societies' inclination towards a more individualistic lifestyle, the urge to be a part of the collective manifest itself in many different occasions. This also results in being very much involved in the news about the state, and being highly political (and for most people lacking knowledge is not an issue for having an opinion), even if people try to avoid the political agenda, the political agenda shows itself to them. Inevitably one finds himself in this vortex.

Memory is a crucial aspect in the formation of identity, both on the scale of the individual and society. As primary sources of information, media images possess the ability to shape a community's identity. This is exploited by those in power through the curation of images determined by particular political agendas.

I am interested in the different ways our public(social) memory is continuously being reconstructed, through the images we are constantly exposed to through the screens that surround us. This interactivity of these screens, be it a TV with channels, or surfing the WWW on a laptop, gives us the impression that we are in control of these images. Often, the choice of images

are determined (in terms of the content and the aesthetics) by an institution of power, be it the government, a news agency, the reporter, or media bosses. All the choices that are made from the recording of the image to the distribution of the image always contain a political influence. I want to interrogate these images that shape our memory, with reference to specific historical events in my country.

Who?

I believe all the tutors and fellow students from the masters can help me through sharing their points of view about the project, but especially Natasha with her insight and Barend with his knowledge on post production. My friends of Turkish nationality can help me by sharing their thoughts on "unforgettable events" on Turkish media, or their thoughts on the traumatic events that I plan to show in the video. I also have a friend working in 140 Journos, an online independent media organization, who is also making videos from found footage, he can help me by directing me to other sources, real archives, besides the online sources that I use.

Previous Practice

In the film I made for the Eye ResearchLabs I tried to cover the subject of recollection of a past event, and aimed to show the fragility of memory. With "Transgross", I made a curation of the forgotten images in my hard drive to create a physical object that would be disturbing and beautiful at the same time. In the analog images that I made in the darkroom or with the scanner, I questioned the limits of a photograph, and aimed to create a certain language for myself that would convey the feeling of the abject, the traumatic. I might use the same physical manipulation techniques for the still images of this project.

Also, I can say that the subjects that we covered in our annotated reader last year form a basis to my work, especially with the terminology Flusser uses and his understanding of the cybernetic structure of the apparatus.

Larger Context

In the larger context, the works are connected to the recollection of past events in social domain; therefore the people that produced texts on the collective memory, such as Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora, Jan Assmann, Henri Bergson are relevant. In terms of his works on the ICTs and as a more contemporary philosopher, I think the work of Bernard Stiegler might be relevant as well.

Some artists that I relate in terms of the subjects they cover and methods they utilize are Harun Farocki, Robert Rauschenberg, Hito Steyerl and Walid Raad.

References

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